

Disappointment Cleaver Route to Paradise where they were to meet Glenn's wife. The party was due out on June 19.

They left the White River Campground Wye around 0600 enroute for a camp on the lower Curtis Ridge. They encountered route finding difficulty on the Carbon Glacier and camped on the middle of the Carbon Glacier below Liberty Ridge, their intended route. They stopped and camped around midnight. On June 18, they departed camp around 0800 and climbed to Thumb Rock where they camped. On June 19, they departed Thumb Rock around 0700 in worsening weather. The weather plus the fact that they did not get an early start caused them to not make the climb that day. They camped in a crevasse just below the bergschrund at 4000 meters.

During the next two days the weather was very poor. They did, however, climb a bit higher, to a point just above the bergschrund, where they camped in another crevasse.

On June 22, now three days overdue, they waited to get out of their crevasse until the sun came up and conditions warmed. Shortly after they had moved, we flew in by helicopter and the party was picked up. Glenn suffered frostbite on seven of his toes. (Source: Bundy Phillips, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

### **Analysis**

The climbers left the campground with a half liter of fuel and possibly a malfunctioning stove. Both wore single leather boots and carried no tent. The weather report for the mountain indicated storm conditions for the time they planned to be on the climb. (Source: Bundy Phillips, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

## **FALLING ROCK, POOR POSITION**

### **Washington, Sahale Mountain**

On June 24, 1984, Rick Jali (50) was climbing the south side of Sahale and was 20 meters below the summit, watching another member of his party climbing directly above when a dislodged rock struck Jali's forearm. Injury was slight, and he walked out with no assistance. (Source: R. Beckenbaugh, The Mountaineers)

### **Analysis**

Those watching climbers should be advised not to watch from directly below. (Source: R. Beckenbaugh, The Mountaineers)

## **FALLING ROCK, FAILURE TO TEST HOLDS**

### **Washington, Chair Peak**

On June 30, 1984, The Mountain School, a well-known climbing academy that has been operated by Ray Smutek out of Renton for the last 14 years, had just finished five intensive days of training in the Leavenworth area and had moved their operation to Snoqualmie Pass for some mixed alpine climbing. Ray split the group into three teams, each under a professional instructor, and they left base to climb the Northeast Buttress of Chair Peak and routes on the Tooth and Guye Peak. Bill Prittie, the instructor with the Chair Peak team, took his four clients in the Snow Lake trail at 0820. Prittie recalls:

"We reached the base of the technical part of the route at just before noon. I took

my time bringing everyone up to the start, as there was a party of two just ahead of us and I wanted to keep my party clear of any rockfall that they generated while we were exposed underneath them. The first two pitches climb a gully with a lot of loose rock in it. After that the route turns to the left, and those below are not normally exposed. We started climbing with me leading around 1230. I led the first pitch and placed protection, then pulled my rope up while the leader of the next rope climbed to the belay anchor, anchored himself, and brought his rope partner up on belay."

The second rope followed, with Tom Stilwell (25) of Washington, DC, belaying from below from a well protected stance. Prittie, again: "I was proceeding up, placing protection on the second pitch. The rock was very wet, so we were climbing slowly and carefully with a lot of anchors in. At this point (about 1345) while near the top of the second pitch, I heard what I thought was thunder. In a few seconds I realized that I was hearing massive rockfall, glanced up and saw a basketball-sized rock bouncing down at me. I jumped off the right hand wall and into a pocket in the bottom of the gully while screaming 'Rock' numerous times, which was repeated by everyone below. The rock coming at me just missed my head. From where I was I could see numerous (over a dozen at least) large rocks vaulting over the top of the buttress. Some appeared to be a meter or more in diameter. It seemed like the barrage lasted a long time, but it probably wasn't more than half a minute. After it was over the party shouted up at me to see if I was OK, and then we all called down to Tom numerous times with no response. I began to hear what I thought were moanings from below, so I climbed out on the right hand face of the gully so that I could see down, and I could see Tom lying on the ground on his face. He appeared to try to get up and collapsed."

The party descended to Stilwell with care. At first he was semi-coherent and was able to respond to simple questions, but he rapidly became unresponsive, his pupils dilated, and he had very shallow respiration and a very weak pulse. A quick check disclosed a broken femur, and while maintaining head and neck stability, the victim was moved about 60 centimeters to an area less subject to additional rockfall. The party now noticed people in the Source Lake Basin, so they shouted down the basic information and asked them to go for help. By this time (about 1420), no pulse or breathing could be detected, so mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was started. This was maintained for 50 minutes, though it was increasingly difficult to maintain an airway.

The rockfall was witnessed by Ron Hawlett of Kirkland and Dick Snavelly of Redmond, who were eating lunch at the summit of Bryant Peak. They could see two climbers, one at the summit of Chair and one near the false summit, but did not know that injuries had occurred until they heard Prittie's party call to the people in the basin. These two, John Alving and Larry Weeden, hurried to Alpentel and phoned the sheriff. A MAST helicopter from Fort Lewis was called and Officer Glen McKinney was dispatched while the SAR duty officers were notified. MRC was called at 1527, and fast alpine team members left immediately with a follow-up group meeting at Eastgate at 1700.

Meanwhile, Prittie's party left the deceased victim at the base of the face and started the descent to the basin. Soon they heard the helicopter coming up the valley so they waved it off with a stuff bag, indicating that there was no longer any life-threatening emergency that required immediate evacuation. MAST returned to Fort Lewis, requiring a carryout. On the way to Alpentel Prittie's party was overtaken by the two climbers from above.

Prittie continues: "One said that he had been climbing the last pitch just below the saddle at the false summit and had pulled a large block loose on top of himself while making a move and hurt his hand rather badly. His partner had caught his fall on the rope. This block had apparently started all of the rockfall, coming from almost at the summit, over a hundred meters above. When he found out about Tom it really hit the poor guy hard and his comment was, 'That's it, I quit.'"

"By the time this two-man party came through base, shortly after 1800, the situation was very confused. Sheriff's personnel, ESAR, MRC, and some communication specialists were all just arriving, and since no one realized that they were directly involved in the accident, no one would take the time to debrief them. They finally left for Nelems Hospital in North Bend to get the hand fixed. When it was realized that no one knew the identity of the party creating the rockfall, it was thought that they might never be located, but on the following Monday, in what I would consider an act of unusual courage, they called in to the Sheriff and identified themselves."

The lower and carryout of the victim was completed by midnight. (Source: *Bergtrage*, Seattle Mountain Rescue Council, 84-08, July 1984)

### **Analysis**

The following statement was given by the climber who dislodged the rock which resulted in the accident below him.

I have been climbing for approximately five years and my formal climbing training was completed this year when I took the Tacoma Mountaineers Basic Climbing Course. I am a member of the Tacoma Mountaineers. Our route of ascent was the northeast buttress to Chair Peak. Our route of descent was through the chimney route through Thumb Tack.

My partner and I were on the last pitch of the false summit, and my partner was above me and belaying. He was anchored in and I was cleaning the pitch. I was climbing over a large block, and as I pulled, it came out. The block looked solid and we were being careful, as we had encountered loose rock all day during the climb. When the block came out, it mowed me over and I was knocked loose and was hanging on the rope. I then climbed back on the rock area. I couldn't communicate with my partner, as the winds were blowing. A climbing party on Bryant Peak yelled over to see if we were OK. I yelled back, "Yes." My partner pulled me up to the false summit and gave me first-aid as I had my left hand injured and many lacerations and bruises. When the block came out, I didn't see where the rock fall went. We discussed our descent route to avoid technical climbing and any further rock slides. (Source: King County Department of Public Safety)

### **FALLING ROCK**

#### **Washington, Mount Buckner**

On July 21, 1984, a group of eight climbers from The Mountaineers began an outing whose principal objective was an ascent of the North Face of Mount Buckner (3311